



Maricopa County

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Nile virus 2005

First West Nile virus death confirmed in Maricopa County

PHOENIX – A male in his sixties from the northwest valley has died from West Nile virus (WNV). This is the first human death from WNV in Maricopa County and in Arizona for the 2005 season.

The man died September 5th at a Valley hospital where he had been taken after becoming ill, health officials said. The Arizona Department of Health Services Public Health (ADHS) Lab confirmed today that the man died from WNV.

"There is not a specific treatment for West Nile infection," said Doug Campos-Outcalt M.D. M.P.A., Maricopa County Department of Public Health Interim Medical Director. "Health care professionals can only provide supportive care and treatment for symptoms."

"Our empathy goes out to the family of the Valley man who has died," said ADHS Director Susan Gerard. "The county and state health departments continue to aggressively respond to positive West Nile virus findings, wherever we find them."

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with West Nile virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Swollen lymph glands
- Skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis and even death. Persons over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

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So far this year, Maricopa County Public Health and Environmental Services departments have received 21 laboratory-confirmed human cases of West Nile virus, 98 WNV positive mosquito samples, 8 positive horses, 2 positive birds and 18 positive sentinel chickens.

David Engelthaler, ADHS State Epidemiologist says, "Arizonans need to remember that even though we don't have nearly the cases of West Nile we did last year, West Nile is here to stay."

Residents are encouraged to mosquito proof their home:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home. Drain standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Install or repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Keep fountains, animal troughs and swimming pools properly operating and free from debris.

Eliminating stagnant water around your home will stop mosquitoes from breeding; however it is very important to avoid all mosquito bites. Apply insect repellent as directed by the product's directions, wear long clothing, and avoid outdoor activity after dusk and before dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

"After you've mosquito proofed your home, work with your neighbors to clean up their yards," said Joy Rich, Maricopa County Assistant Manager. "If you see a green pool or other standing water, suggest it be cleaned up or please report these problems to Environmental Services. We need the help of our entire community in order to be successful."

Maricopa County and ADHS will continue an enhanced surveillance program including sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

In 2004, West Nile virus infected 355 people in Maricopa County; 14 people died from the disease.

For more information, public health assistance, dead bird drop-off locations, and to report stagnant water, green pools, problems with mosquitoes, or to schedule a West Nile presentation for your group or organization visit www.maricopa.gov/wnv or call the West Nile virus Hotline at **602-506-0700**.

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